The Rise of Sustainable Status Living: from Golf Estates to Agrihoods

By Monica Rockstroh

Nationally, the notion of retiring on a golf estate as a sign of wealth and comfort is gaining competition from *agrihoods*, communities of luxury homes built within a functioning agricultural farm and

Agrihoods are communities centered around sustainable agricultural practices

generally accompanied by well-structured sustainability plans. From The Cannery in Davis, California (previously a 100-acre site of a tomato cannery[1]) to the Serenbe development on the outskirts of Atlanta (home to a 25-acre organic farm with a thriving CSA program[2]), agrihoods are making their way to urban fringe areas coast to coast. Illinois is no stranger to agrihoods, having developed the first pastoral planned community in the country, The Village of Riverside, in the mid-1800s. Famous Central Park designers Fredrick Law Olmstead and Calvert Vaux were tasked with creating a rural feeling within the Chicago suburb[3]. In the early 1990s, Illinois saw the formation of the conservation focused Prairie Crossing development in the Village of Grayslake[4].

ISASCE Sustainability Committee member Stan Walczynski recently learned of the newest agrihood in the region when he volunteered as a guide and greeter for the US Green Building Council's 2017 GreenBuilt Home Tour, which featured Serosun Farms development 50 miles north west of Chicago, in Hampshire, Illinois. The annual tour is an opportunity to visit nearly a dozen homes, throughout Chicago and its surrounding suburbs, which utilize a variety of sustainable practices and technology. Walczynski was impressed with the technologies and land use practices of Serosun Farms, particularly its use of geothermal energy and preservation of 30% open space; including a majority

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Serosun Farm's Model Home. Photo Credit: Serosun Farms

[1]Community at The Cannery. (2016). Retrieved July 31, 2017, from http://livecannerydavis.com/#community

[2]About Serenbe. (2017). Retrieved July 31, 2017, from http://serenbe.com/about#about-serenbe

[3]Roth, A. (2014, November 06). Before 'Agrihoods': America's Odd History of Planned Communities. Retrieved July 28, 2017, from http://modernfarmer.com/2014/11/agrihoods/

[4]History. (2017). Retrieved July 28, 2017, from http://prairiecrossing.com/about/history/

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Aerial view of Serosun Farms. Photo Credit: Serosun Farms

portion of each lot which is planted with native prairie vegetation[5].

Serosun Farms centers 1+ acre lots around an existing 160 acre working farm

Aimed to be a living laboratory of sorts, this development provides opportunities to learn and experiment with sustainable farming and living practices, while demonstrating how to integrate these into modern day life through ever-evolving technology[6].

This residential development – one part neighborhood and equal part farm – has a vision to celebrate agriculture and food through the harvest of artesian crops featured at an on-site farm stand; and by educating residents on culinary traditions of the past through nourishing ingredients and local farming[7]. With the aim of reconnecting residents to the rural and natural life that was once the norm in northern Illinois, Serosun Farms plans to provide a walking trail to its marsh, with a flourishing native bird habitat, and a farmer's market, just a short bike ride across the farm.

Permeable concrete driveways and natural open swales at Serosun Farms reduce runoff and increase groundwater recharge

While luxury golf estates are still desirable retirement properties, such developments are no doubt seeing competition from the water wise, energy efficient, sustainable agrihood communities.

[5]Walczynski, S., P.E. (2017, August 4). Discussion of Serosun Farms [E-mail interview].

[6]About Serosun Farms. (n.d.). Retrieved July 28, 2017, from http://www.serosunfarms.com/home/about/

[7]Society at Serosun Farms. (n.d.). Retrieved July 28, 2017, from http://www.serosunfarms.com/sustainability/society/

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